

#### **5.4.1 The First and The Second**

Everything that comes into Being after the First may trace its origin back to the First. This is true whether something is directly linked to the First or must trace its origin through several intermediaries. Thus, it follows that there is an ontological hierarchy, with the First preceding the Second, with the Second preceding the Third, and so on. Above all Beings must be a simplicity which stands apart from them. Such a simplicity must simultaneously not mingle with the proceeding Beings, yet also preside over them all and thus be present to them in its unique way. It must be true undifferentiated Unity, not merely a Unity of multiple things (which is more akin to a counterfeit of Unity than the original). It will resist all direct thought and speech, describable only as transcendent or beyond Being. If were not apart from multiplicity, composition, and combination, then it could not be the primal Principle. Its self-sufficiency is tied with its absolute simplicity, allowing it to be First. After all, everything which comes after the First is contingent upon the First, and only that which is most simple does not rely on even simpler components.

That which is First and One must be totally unique. If there were something similar to it, then it would be more than One. It is worth noting that we are not even speaking of Bodies or determining which of two Bodies is First. No Body is simple, and all Bodies are generated by Principles, not Principles in of themselves. "The beginning is ungenerated." (See Plato's *Phaedrus* 245d). Thus, the First must be ungenerated and incorporeal to be the Principle of everything else. As a consequence of this, anything which comes after the First cannot be simple. The closest the Second can get to the simplicity of the First is to be the Unified Many or the All in One. Where does the Second come from? The First, of course. It does not arise out of nothing, as this would imply that the First is no longer the original Principle of all things.

How is the Unified Many derived from pure Unity? Since the First encompasses all things, it is the most perfect. If the First is the most perfect, it follows that it is also the most powerful. If the First thus represents the first power, then all proceeding instances of power must reference this first power for their identity as powers. The closer each proceeding thing is able to mimic the power of the First, the more powerful said proceeding thing. Reflection upon all things which reach their capacity for power reveals that this power overflows and imparts something else. This is true for animals with the ability to make choices, but even inanimate objects. Fire emits heat, ice emits cold. Even something as simple as fruit will stain clothing with its juices. All things imitate the First Principle and seek their own immortality by procreation or the perpetuation of causal mechanisms external to themselves. Given the fact that all powerful things generate something, how could the most powerful, ancient, and most perfect Principle remain within itself? Are we to suppose that the supreme Good could possibly be jealous of its offspring? Are we to deny the power of generation to the source of all power? How could the First be the Principle of all things if it never generated anything else? The First must beget something, and as a consequence its offspring will seek to imitate it and beget something as well. Thus, the First is not the last. Yet this Second thing must be exalted. It is the offspring of the greatest Good, and it is the progenitor of everything thereafter. Put simply, the Second must be superior to everything which follows it.

#### **5.4.2 How the First Emanates the Second**

If Intellect were the original Principle of generation, then the Second generated thing would be a diminished copy of Intellect. Yet the original Principle of generation transcends Intellect, and so Intellect must necessarily be the Second. What prevents Intellect from being the original Principle of generation? It is because Intellect is defined by the Act of Intellection. Intellect is completed when it turns its attention to The One. Intellect begins as an Indefinite power to grasp things Intellectually. It is only through the act of Intellectualization that it gains its Definition. This is why it is said that the Indefinite Dyad and The One produce Number and Form. The Dyad is Intellect. Intellect is composite. Although its parts are entirely metaphysical, Intellect experiences itself as manifold. Intellect is both the subject which thinks and the objects of primal thought. Consequently, Intellect is a Duality.

Besides its composite parts, Intellect also contemplates the First. How does Intellect, the Second, proceed from the One, the First? The First is self-contained and self-sufficient. Conversely, for Intellect there is need of another to serve as the object of its thought. Yet even though The One remains simple, it is not to be thought of as empty. All things belong to it and are encompassed by it. It certainly encompasses the conceptualization of itself. It also therefore possesses consciousness and thought, albeit in perfect repose and in a way that is incomparable with Intellect's experience of them.

If The One begets something, it necessarily does so without losing any part of itself. Consequently, The One retains its supreme individuality. It is precisely by remaining in perfect individuality that The One produces. It provides the basis of individuality for each thing to participate in. Since Intellect comes to be without removing anything from The One, The One remains as it always does. Since it contains all things and retains them, it remains Intellectual (in its superessential way) upon the generation of Intellect. Intellect is generated in an Intellectual Act, namely contemplation of its source (which is the only possible object of thought initially). Thus, Intellect comes to (via this Act) resemble the object of its contemplation and source. Intellect is like an image of The One.

How does Intellect come to be without affecting The One? How does an Act arise from Rest? To answer this we must differentiate between two Acts. There is the Essential Act and there are the secondary Acts which arise from the Essential Act. For example, Fire is Essentially hot, but it also emanates heat beyond itself as a secondary Act. The heat which emanates from a Fire is a consequence of it Actualizing its Essence. By Being Fire, a Fire emanates heat. The same process occurs in incorporeal spheres. The First remains in its perfect state, and by this self-Actualization the Second occurs as a necessary consequence.

Deriving its power from the most supreme of sources, the Second achieves Essence and Real Being. The One is Beyond all Being, and yet as the source of all Being and Beings it also encompasses them. If Intellect represents All things, then The One transcends All things including Intellect.

If Intellect is All things, and if The One is not All things, then it follows that The One must be antecedent to Essence (i.e. having Essential Properties). Since Essences are what makes up Intellect, then it follows that The One is antecedent to Intellect. Essence is hardly dead or unthanking, as Essence is Intellect. Intelligibles do not exist until they are thought by the primal Intellect itself. The objects of Intellect are

unlike objects of sense. Objects of sense must exist prior to their apprehension by the senses, whereas Intellect is itself comprised of the objects of its thoughts. The Ideal Forms do not come to Intellect from somewhere else. Where else could they come from? Intelligence exists as the objects of Intellect. Thought is identical with the objects of thought. In turn, Intellectual objects do not exist without an Intelligence thinking them.